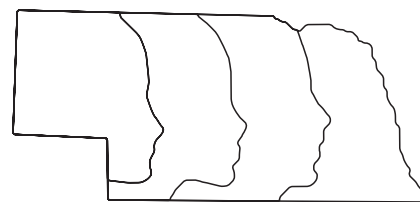


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Every Woman Matters



NEBRASKA OFFICE OF WOMEN'S HEALTH

Healthy Ways...Healthy Days

It's Never Too Late to Quit!

Many smokers in their 50s, 60s, or older have been smoking for years. It isn't uncommon to hear some of these folks say "I've smoked since I've been 15 and I'm as healthy as a horse!"

While that may sometimes be the case, older smokers as a whole experience greater risks from smoking because they have smoked longer, tend to be heavier smokers, and are more likely to suffer from smoking-related illnesses.

No matter your age, you will immediately start to recognize some health benefits if you quit smoking. For example:

- Within 20 minutes of smoking the last cigarette: your blood pressure and pulse rate drops to near normal and the temperature of your hands and feet increase.
- Within 8 hours: the carbon monoxide level in your blood drops and the oxygen level in your blood increases.
- After 24 hours: the chance of having a heart attack decreases.
- Within 3 days: breathing is easier.
- Within 2 to 3 months: circulation improves, walking becomes easier, and lung function increases up to 30%.
- In 1 to 9 months: coughing, sinus congestion, fatigue, & shortness of breath decrease and energy increases.
- Within 1 year: the risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a smoker.
- Within 2 years: the risk of heart attack drops to near normal.

Additionally, cigarette smokers are more than twice as likely as nonsmokers to develop dementia of any kind and

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If you would like more information on women's health issues, please visit our website:

www.hhss.ne.gov/womenshealth

or contact us at

every.woman.matters@hhss.ne.gov

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Know Your Numbers!

The first step to heart health and living a healthier lifestyle.

Knowing your numbers is an important part of keeping your heart healthy. These numbers can help you and your healthcare provider determine your risks and mark the progress you're making toward a long and heart healthy life.

Use this handy chart for a quick overview of numbers you need to know and the goals you need to achieve that will reduce your risk for heart disease. Use the questions below as a guide to visit with your healthcare provider at your next appointment.

Factor	Goal
Total Cholesterol	Less than 200
LDL ("Bad") Cholesterol	LDL cholesterol goals vary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> People who are at low risk for heart disease: <160 People at intermediate risk for heart disease: <130 People at high risk for heart disease including those who have heart disease or diabetes: <100 (Some high-risk patients will have a goal of <70)
HDL ("Good") Cholesterol	50 or higher
Triglycerides	Less than 150
Blood Pressure	Less than 120/80
Fasting Glucose	Less than 100
Body Mass Index (BMI)	Less than 25
Waist Circumference	Less than 35 inches
Exercise	Minimum of 30 minutes most days, if not all days of the week

Questions For Your Healthcare Provider

Cholesterol <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is my total cholesterol level? What is my triglyceride level? What are my HDL ("good") and LDL ("bad") levels? What is cholesterol and how may it affect my health? What is a healthy cholesterol level? How often should I have my cholesterol checked? 	High Blood Pressure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is my blood pressure? What is my systolic number? What is my diastolic number? What is high blood pressure and how may it affect my health? How often should I have my blood pressure checked?
Obesity and Body Mass Index <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is my weight? What is my height? What is my Body Mass Index (BMI)? What range is healthy for me? At what weight would I be considered overweight? Obese? 	Diabetes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is my fasting blood glucose (sugar)? What is diabetes and how may it affect my heart health? Diabetes runs in my family. How can I prevent it? If I have diabetes. How can I control it?
Physical Activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What can I do to increase my physical activity levels? 	Risk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If I am at intermediate or high risk for heart disease, are medicines for blood pressure control, cholesterol control (e.g., statin, niacin, fibrates) and aspirin appropriate for me?
Family History <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does my family history of heart disease and stroke put me at increased risk for these diseases? 	Heart Attack and Stroke <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is a heart attack? What is a stroke? What are my risk factors for heart attack and stroke? How would I know if I am having a heart attack or stroke? What should I do if I think I'm having a heart attack or stroke?

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Healthy Recipes

Special Tea

2 cups water 1 cinnamon stick
1 whole clove 1/4 teaspoon allspice
Dash of nutmeg 1 strip lemon peel
2 tea bags 1 strip orange peel

In a saucepan, combine all ingredients except tea bags. Simmer for 5 minutes. Add tea bags. Let steep to taste. Strain and serve.

Makes two servings.

Nutrition Information Per Serving: 4 Calories; 1g Carbohydrates; 0g Protein; 0g Fat, 0g Saturated Fat; 0g Fiber; 7 mg Sodium; 92 mg Potassium; 2 mg Calcium, 0 mg Cholesterol

Cheese Soup

1 3/4 cups chicken broth
1/2 cup diced carrots
1/3 cup chopped onion
1 3/4 cup skim milk
1/4 cup flour
1 cup shredded American cheese

Combine chicken broth, carrot and onion in a saucepan. Bring broth and vegetables to boiling. Cover and simmer for 10 minutes or until the vegetables are tender. Add milk and heat. Add flour to cheese, coating cheese with the flour. Add to milk and broth mixture stirring constantly until soup is bubbly and thick. Cook 1 minute longer.

Makes three servings.

Nutrition Information Per Serving: 274 Calories, 21g Carbohydrates; 13g Fat; 38mg Cholesterol; 18g Protein; 2g Fiber; 1083mg Sodium (high in sodium); 8g Saturated Fat; 533mg Potassium; 428mg Calcium

Frozen Strawberry Salad

8 ounces non-fat cream cheese
1 10-ounce can crushed pineapple, drained
1 10-ounce pkg. unsweetened strawberries
5 packages artificial sweetener
2 bananas
8 ounces fat-free whipped topping

Place all ingredients except for whipped topping into a blender. Blend for several seconds. Stir whipped topping into blended ingredients. Freeze in a 9-inch square pan.

Makes 8 servings.

Nutrition Information Per Serving: 64 Calories; 1g Fat; 4g Protein; 12g Carbohydrates; 1g Saturated Fat; 128mg Sodium; 145 mg Potassium; 1g Fiber; 3 mg Cholesterol; 9 mg Calcium

A-Z Cooking Dictionary

Al dente - Pasta cooked until tender but slightly firm.

Bake - To cook, covered or uncovered, in an oven by dry heat.

Baste - To keep foods moist during cooking with a sauce, pan juice or wine.

Beat - To mix ingredients rapidly so that air is incorporated, resulting in a smooth mixture.

Blend - To combine ingredients until a desired consistency is reached, usually until smooth.

Boil - To heat water or other liquids to 212 degrees F. When water boils the surface is covered with bubbles.

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Know Your Numbers (continued from page 2)

Keep Your Numbers in Check:

Get Physical

No time to exercise? That's OK. Don't think exercise — think action. Standing is better than sitting; walking is better than standing. Increase your physical activity to at least 30 minutes a day on most days of the week, even if you do it 10 minutes at a time.

Try including some of these activities in your daily life:

- Use the stairs, up and down, instead of the elevator. Start with one flight of stairs and gradually build up to more.
- Sweep the floor, wash windows or vacuum the carpet briskly.
- Take your children to the park and play with them. Don't sit on the bench and watch.
- Write physical activity "appointments" into your daily planner or computer schedule.
- Take a walk after dinner instead of watching TV.
- Park a few blocks from the office or store and walk the rest of the way.
- Take an activity break. Get up, stretch and walk around.
- Hide your remote control and get up to change channels on your TV.

Make Healthy Food Choices

Healthy food habits can help you reduce three risk factors for heart attack and stroke—high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, and excess body weight.

Set the stage for success by:

- Eating a balanced diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables, cereal and grain products, fat-free and low-fat dairy products, legumes, nuts, fish, poultry and lean meats.
- Mixing one-half regular soda with one-half diet soda until you get used to the taste of diet soda.
- Eating foods low in saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol.
- Enjoying a large glass of ice water, hot tea or another calorie-free beverage. Garnish with a twist of lemon or lime and sip slowly.
- Dividing the extra portions of recipes that serve a large number of people into containers to eat throughout the rest of the week.
- Eating with other people. You'll eat less than if you eat alone.
- Knowing your snack "triggers" and planning ahead. Be ready with healthy snacks to fight the urge for high calorie/high-saturated-fat foods and trans fat foods. Grab pre-cut vegetables such as carrots and celery when you're on the run.

Kick Butts

Smoking is the single most preventable cause of death in the United States. If you smoke cigarettes (or cigars), you have a higher risk of illness and death from heart attack, stroke and other diseases. These include lung, mouth and throat cancers; chronic lung diseases and infections; congestive heart failure; and peripheral vascular disease (in the legs and arms). The threat grows: constant exposure to other people's tobacco smoke increases your risk, even if you don't smoke.

The good news is that when you stop smoking — no matter how long or how much you've smoked — your risk of heart disease and stroke starts to drop. It's cut in half after one year without smoking, then continues to decline until it's as low as a nonsmoker's risk. See the article on page 1 and 7 about the Nebraska Quitline—a toll-free resource to help you quit!

Knowing Your Family's Medical History Can Save Your Life

Many of us know diet and exercise make a difference when it comes to our health and how many years of good health we have. But did you know that your family history could be one of the strongest influences when it comes to developing diabetes, heart disease, stroke or cancer?

Family history helps identify health problems that run in a particular family. Everyone should take time to put together their family history and pass that information on to their healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider can use that information to look for any health concerns and talk with you about steps you can take now to help live a longer and healthier life.

According to health experts, having a family member with a certain disease means you may have a higher chance of getting it. It doesn't mean that you will get it but it is important to know the increased risk is there. For example, if there is a family history of cancer, your healthcare provider may order screening tests that could detect disease early, visit with you about your lifestyle and suggest healthier behaviors that could help prevent health concerns down the road.

So how do you go about gather family health history? What information do you need?

It's fairly simple — **Talk to Your Family!**

Most Important: Parents, Brothers and Sisters and Your Children

Also Important: Grandparents, Uncles and Aunts, Nieces and Nephews and any Half-Brothers or Half-Sisters

Also Helpful: Cousins, Great Uncles and Great Aunts

What Information Do I Need?

Talk Directly With Your Relatives: Explain to them their health information can help improve prevention and screening for diseases for all family members.

Ask About Any Health Conditions They Have Had: Get as much specific information as possible.

- Ask about any major medical conditions and causes of death.
- Age when family member was diagnosed with the disease and age of death.
- Ethnic background is also important, as certain ethnicities are at higher risk of some diseases.
- List of medications any relatives may currently be taking.
- General lifestyle information like smoking or drinking is also helpful to know.

An easy to use tool to help you collect your family health history is the "My Family Health Portrait". The form is available at www.hhs.gov/familyhistory. You may fill out the family tree on-line or print a hard copy of the chart and fill in the blanks by hand. The chart is available in English, Spanish, Chinese, French, Polish and Portuguese on-line. To order free copies by phone, call toll-free 1-888-275-4772 and ask for "My Family Health Portrait" in English or Spanish.

This tree or chart is a simple way for you to list your relatives and any information about them. You may also list all of this information in a notebook or in a format that is easy for you to use.

(Continued on Page 6)

Knowing Your Family's Medical Health History (continued from page 5)

Some people can't find out the health history of every member of their family so there may be blanks in your chart or gaps of information. If you're adopted, the challenge may also include accessing family medical information from birth parents. The Child Welfare Information

Gateway (www.childwelfare.gov) is a resource that may help with that process.

Once your chart or listing of information is complete, it is important to share it with your family. Don't forget the final step- to share it with your healthcare provider. You can't change your genes, but putting together a family health history and passing it on to your healthcare provider is one way to help yourself and your family stay health.

Sources: U.S. Department of Health & Human Services~ U.S. Surgeon General's Family History Initiative
Nebraska Health & Human Services~ November 2006 'Connections'

You're Invited

The Office of Women's Health would like to extend an invitation to our Every Woman Matters Program clients to take part in two different activities.

1) The NEW Health Marketing Consumer Group

As a participant of the Health Marketing Consumer Group you will provide valuable information and feedback via e-mail that will be used to make important marketing and materials development decisions and directly impact the services available to all current and potential clients.

2) The Every Woman Matters Breast and Cervical Cancer Advisory Committee

The Every Woman Matters Breast and Cervical Cancer Advisory Committee is comprised of a group of individuals from across the state who help raise public awareness and encourages contributions of public and private funds specifically for treatment dollars for women in Nebraska who are not eligible for Medicaid program, which is available to most women screened by Every Woman Matters.

If you're interested in being added to the consumer group e-mail listserve or would like additional information about how to be a part of the Every Woman Matters Breast and Cervical Advisory Committee, please contact us at:

every.woman.matters@hhss.ne.gov

OR

1-800-532-2227

Jennie Oliver (Breast and Cervical Advisory Committee)

Tracey Bonneau (Consumer Group)

March is Colon Cancer Awareness Month

The End of Colon Cancer Begins with Your screening. Get it done and tell someone you love. March is National Colon Cancer Awareness Month. During the month of March get screened for colon cancer and raise awareness about the importance of screening. Not only for yourself but those you care about.

Colon cancer (which includes cancer of the colon, rectum, anus, and appendix) is the second-leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States. Only lung cancer claims more lives. This year nearly 131,000 Americans will be diagnosed with colon cancer and 56,000 will die.

The Nebraska Colon Cancer Screening Program is a new program and is a part of the Every Woman Matters Program. The goals of the program are to:

1. Educate Nebraskans about the need for colon and rectal cancer screening.
2. Decrease the number of Nebraskans who develop colon and rectal cancers through preventive screening.
3. Provide appropriate education and/or colon and rectal cancer screening tests to Nebraskans who are under or uninsured through the Every Woman Matters program.

How do you enroll?

Contact the Nebraska Colon Cancer Screening Program at 1-800-532-2227 to receive an enrollment packet. You can also go online to www.hhss.ne.gov/crc and download an enrollment form. To be eligible for the program you must be at least 50 years of age or older and fall within the income guidelines. Call us for more information.

It's Never Too Late to Quit! (continued from page 1)

Alzheimer's disease. Smokers also have two to three times the risk of developing cataracts, the leading cause of blindness and vision loss.

The Nebraska Tobacco Quitline's toll-free number is 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669). By calling this free resource, you'll be connected

with a trained cessation counselor who can help support your efforts to quit. The Nebraska Quitline is sponsored by the Nebraska Health and Human Services System's Tobacco Free Nebraska program and gives Nebraska residents 24/7 access to tobacco cessation counseling and support services.



for a great state of health

Counselors will develop a personalized "Quit Plan" to help you stop using tobacco by setting specific goals, as well as target dates for quitting, and strategies for fighting cravings. Callers receive a choice of services including telephone counseling, self-help materials, information/community resources, or any combination of these services. Follow-up calls depend on what works best for the caller. All information is confidential.

And, finally, don't be discouraged! Many tobacco users try to quit 5 to 7 times before they achieve long-term success. Each quit attempt teaches you a bit more about what worked and didn't work for you. Remember, you CAN do it and you will be healthier as a result.

Sources: American Lung Association, American Cancer Society, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Spring Cleaning: Make Your Home a Healthy Home

By Lorene Bartos, Extension Educator, University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension

On the first warm days of spring, everybody has experienced the desire to welcome the season by saying good-bye to winter's dirt and dust. But did you know a thorough house cleaning can boost your health as well as your spirits?

The symptoms from common allergens, such as dust, mold, mildew and pollen from ragweed, grass and trees, can be dreadful. One of the easiest ways for allergy sufferers to reduce their symptoms—sneezing, itching, runny nose and watering eyes—is to give their home a thorough cleaning. And keeping your windows closed will help keep the pollen out. Check to see your air-conditioning filters are clean because dust mites and mold can grow on them.

There's no time like springtime to tackle a seasons' worth of dirt and dust. Cleaning household surfaces, washing bedding, dusting and vacuuming can help reduce allergy symptoms, and they'll make your house sparkle, too. Just be sure to read and follow directions on cleaning product labels for safe and effective use.

Here are some cleaning tips to help reduce home allergens throughout the year:

- **Start with the Bedroom:** Launder all washable sheets, mattress covers, pillows and bed skirts, blankets and comforters. Flip your mattresses and vacuum them. Many allergies are triggered by the tiny dust mites in your bedding.
- **Dust, Dust, Dust:** Use a clean, soft cloth sprayed with a dusting product. Dust stereo components, dust above and below your television set and remove books from shelves, so you can wipe them down properly.
- **Vacuum Everywhere:** Vacuum under your beds, couch and chairs, behind your dressers, tables, refrigerator, oven, television and stereo. Remove cushions and vacuum underneath. Be sure to do the crevices of upholstery and lamp shades.
- **Don't Forget the Carpets:** Dirt not only aggravates allergies, it grinds into carpet fibers and weakens them. Vacuum carpets frequently and use a carpet cleaner to remove stains. Moisture promotes the growth of molds and other allergens, so keep carpets as dry as possible.
- **Scrub the Bathroom:** Use a mildew stain remover on your tub and shower walls and a hard water remover to take care of those crusty hard water mineral deposits.
- **Clean the Fridge:** Old food tends to find its way into the back corners of the refrigerator. Try pulling out everything (store perishable items in a second refrigerator or well-iced cooler while working) and wash shelves and storage bins with a non-abrasive all-purpose cleaner or a solution of baking soda and water.
- **Wash the Floors:** Wash vinyl and ceramic tile floors with a non-abrasive, all-purpose cleaner or a floor cleaner. Use a no-rinse product or rinse the floor well after cleaning. For really dirty floors, you may have to drop the mop and scrub! Use a wood cleaner on your hardwood floors.
- **Hit the Closets:** Pull out your winter clothes and decide which clothes need to be washed or dry cleaned before storing. Consider donating to charity anything you didn't wear in the fall or winter. Don't forget to move your shoes and vacuum the floor.
- **Improve Your Vision:** Spring is the perfect time to wash windows and screens. Use a glass cleaner or glass and multi-surface cleaner for non-streaking window cleaning. While screens let the fresh air in, they also collect a lot of dirt. Remove the screens from their tracks and line them up outside. Gently scrub them with a brush dipped in a solution of all-purpose cleaner and water. Hose them down and watch the dirt wash away. Guaranteed 20/20 vision and better breathing.

Make your home a healthy home with a thorough spring cleaning.

Rural Stress

Rural life in Nebraska can be more tranquil than the hustle and bustle of city life, but rural life can also bring about its own set of unique stressors and worries. There are many aspects of rural life and farming that are out of our control. What we can do is help and support each other through the difficult times ahead.

The Nebraska Farm Hotline (1-800-464-0258) is one of the primary services provided by the Farm and Rural Response Network and Interchurch Ministries of Nebraska. When a farmer, rancher, or rural resident calls the Hotline, an experienced staff person will answer. Hotline staff will respond directly to callers, spend time finding out issues and needs, provide helpful information and refer you to the right person based upon your need. Those referrals include financial counselors, attorneys, clergy, other farmers, and mediation services.

In addition, through the Counseling, Outreach, and Mental Health Therapy Program (COMHT) Mental Health staff assist callers in dealing with stress, depression, and other mental health issues that often cloud the caller's decision-making abilities. No-cost vouchers and information on confidential mental health issues for persons affected by the rural crisis are available. Funding for the COMHT Program is provided in part through the Nebraska Departments of Health & Human Services, Office of Rural Health, and Community Service Block Grant.

Resources

- Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Hotline, 1-800-876-6238
- Emergency Food Pantry Assistance, 1-800-464-0258
- Farm & Legal Assistance Clinics 1-800-464-0258
- Kids Connection 1-877-632-5437
- Nebraska Farm Mediation Service 1-800-446-4071
- Nebraska Health Ministry Network 1-308-345-5605
- Nebraska Legal Services 1-877-250-2016

Farm Programs

- Ag Credit 1-402-437-5455
- Farm Service Agency, U.S. Department of Agriculture State Office 1-402-437-5581
- Nebraska AgrAbility Project 1-800-471-6425

Financial Information

- Donald S. Kalcik, CPA 1-402-435-2477
- University of Nebraska Farm Financial Information 1-800-535-3456

A-Z Cooking Dictionary

Broil - A quick, dry heat cooking method done in the oven using the broiler setting. Used for more tender cuts. Less tender cuts can be used if marinated.

Broiler Pan - A rectangular pan with a rack, usually included in the purchase of an oven.

Brown - To cook food quickly in a preheated oven, broiler, or hot skillet to "brown" the outside and seal in the juices.

Butterfly - To split food down the center without cutting all the way through so two pieces can be opened like butterfly wings.

Cajun seasoning - A dried mixture of Cajun spices found in the spice section of the grocery store.

Caramelize - To sprinkle food with a small amount of sugar and saute until browned.

Carve - To slice meat across the grain for serving.

Chop - To cut food into pieces. Can range from small to large in size.

Chutney - A sauce or relish containing fruits, spices and herbs.

Clove - One small section of a segmented bulb, such as garlic. Also a spice.

Core - To remove the inedible center portion of a fruit or vegetable.

Crouton - Hard toasted or fried pieces of bread used to garnish.

Cube - To cut food into uniform half-inch squares.

Cure - To preserve meat by either smoking, drying, pickling or salting.

Dash - Less than an eighth of a teaspoon.

Degrease - To remove the fat from the surface of a liquid.

Dice - To cut into equal sized cubes, ¼ to ½ inch square.

Dilute - To make a sauce or stock weaker by adding more liquid.

Dredge - To coat meat with a dry mixture such as flour, bread or cracker crumbs.

Drizzle - To pour liquid over the surface of food in a fine stream.

Dry heat cooking - Cooking without the addition of liquid. Examples include grilling, broiling and panfrying. Used for tender cuts or less tender cuts that have been marinated.

Dutch oven - A heavy pot with a tight-fitting cover.

More cooking dictionary terms will be featured in the May 2007 through August newsletter.

Post Holiday Blues

We hear the term “Post Holiday Blues”, but just what is that? Other familiar terms are “cabin fever”, or “winter blahs.” A post holiday letdown is common, particularly if the holidays were a pleasant time, doing enjoyable things with others, or if the holidays were a disappointment.

It is not unusual to feel sad or “blue” for a while. Particularly in colder climates because dreary weather contributes to feelings of sadness and isolation, and springtime seems a long way off.

How do we cope with this feeling? A few simple tips will help us begin to be well again:

- 1) **Find someone to share your thoughts or feelings with.** It may be the neighbor next door, or it might be a family member. It might even be necessary to see a professional counselor if the feelings persist and hinder your day-to-day functioning.
- 2) **Set reasonable expectations.**
- 3) **Take care of yourself:** eat right, exercise and get enough rest. Don’t play “mole” in the winter months. Open the drapes and let more light come into your house or office. Take a brisk walk during the noon hour of the day. Get more sunlight.
- 4) **Maintain social contacts.** Isolation contributes to depression.
- 5) **Stay active and involved.** Go to a party even if you don’t want to. Contact old friends. Accomplish tasks that have been put off; rearrange furniture, begin or complete hobbies. Try volunteer work.

What if the blues don’t go away? How long is too long? If the blues or feelings of depression continue past a reasonable time, such as when the weather improves, or by the next holiday, or if those feelings interfere with one’s health, job or social interactions, then it is probably time to ask for outside help. Talk to someone you trust; a family member, friend, minister or priest. And, seek help from a professional therapist or counselor.

By Karen Beery, MS, and Wayne Lofton, Ed.S., Department of Consultation and Education,
High Plains Mental Health Center, Hays, Kansas.

This article should not be considered a replacement for seeking professional help.



The Nebraska Health and Human Services System is committed to affirmative action/ equal employment opportunity and does not discriminate in delivering benefits or services.

Funds for this project were provided through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Breast and Cervical Early Detection Program, Well Integrated Screening and Evaluation for Women Across the Nation, and Colorectal Cancer Screening Demonstration Program Cooperative Agreements with the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services System. #U57/CCU706734-06, #U57/CCU7191-66 and #U55/CCU725047-01 This newsletter is published 3 times per year by the NHHSS Every Woman Matters Program. If you wish to reproduce any of the articles in this newsletter, in whole or in part, please contact us for permission.

NEBRASKA HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES SYSTEM



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www.hhss.ne.gov/womenshealth

Benefits of Journaling?

Journaling is a term coined for the practice of keeping a diary or journal that explores thoughts and feelings surrounding the events of one's life. Journaling, as a stress management and self-exploration tool, is not the same as simply recording the happenings in one's life, like keeping a log. To be most helpful, one must write in detail about feelings and thoughts related to stressful events.

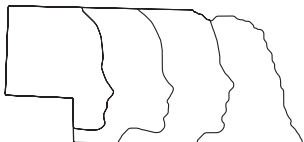
Journaling allows people to clarify their thoughts and feelings, thereby gaining valuable self-knowledge. It's also a good problem-solving tool; oftentimes, one can hash out a problem and come up with solutions more easily on paper.

As for the health benefits of journaling, they've been scientifically proven. Research shows the following:

- 1) Journaling decreases the symptoms of asthma, arthritis, and other health conditions
- 2) It improves cognitive functioning
- 3) It strengthens the immune system, preventing a host of illnesses
- 4) It counteracts many of the negative effects of stress.

Source: <http://stress.about.com/od/generaltechniques/p/profilejournal.htm>

Every Woman Matters



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